

Jack Goodman's Cityview

Kimball's hotel and stage stop was one of the last in nation

Since we seemingly feel the need to maintain that legal 65-mile-per-hour speed limit when rolling along our interstate highways, chances are you've scarcely had time to turn your head for a glance at the cluster of ranch buildings two miles east of the Kimball's Junction exit to Park City and a bit west of Silver Creek Junction. That's especially understandable on a busy holiday weekend when you're threading heavy traffic hoping to stroll Park City's historic Main Street, plan to fish at Wanship, or want to bet a dollar or two on the horses racing at Evanston.

But there was a time in Utah's territorial days when other swift horses raced to and from the still existing sandstone ranch house and its adjacent pair of log-sided barns. A "dig" through the pages of the Historical American Buildings Survey prepared by scholarly Melvin Smith a few years back, reminds one that the big stone structure with its wooden outbuildings packages more history than almost any other such set of structure in all the west. Referred to by most locals as "The Kimball Ranch," the main structures date from 1862. They were built as a much-needed hotel and stage stop by William H. Kimball, eldest son of Heber C. Kimball, recalled in Latter-day Saints histories as a "confidant of Brigham Young."

The stone house and log barns, mellowed by hot summer sun and encased in winter snow and icicles for 138 years, are among the few remaining original stations of the Overland Stage route, buildings that



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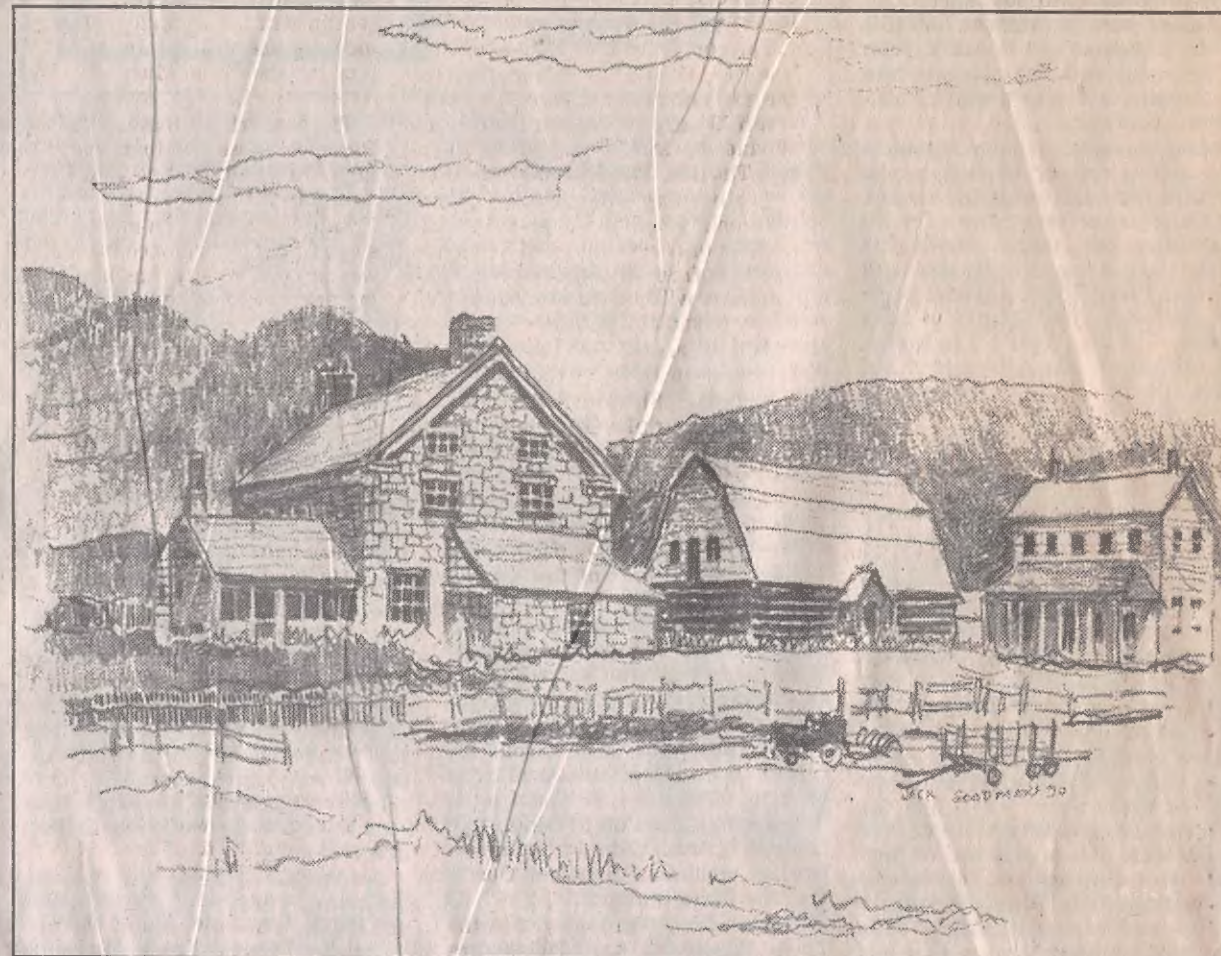
of gravel at a barnyard gate where barking ranch dogs (very properly on guard) have a way of discouraging history-minded strangers from descending from their cars. For the record, the Kimball clan transferred its property to one Brigham Sellers in 1902 after receiving a delayed land patent in 1873. A half-dozen years later, the ranch was sold to Milton O. Bitner (in 1908). Salt Lakers Blaine and Milton C. Bitner and their families have used the historic buildings for their far-ranging livestock operations till the present day.

History (aside from Indian tribal history) began hereabouts in 1848 when Parley P. Pratt first claimed the land. He then built his "Golden Pass Toll Road" through the canyon that still bears his name in 1849-1850, a road followed by numberless emigrant wagons for 20 or more years. Samuel Snyder bought some of Parley's land claim for a yoke of cattle and built a sawmill soon afterwards. His name is memorialized as tiny Snyderville. But land close to what was to become a stone stagecoach station remained in Kimball hands, and William H. Kimball built a wooden bridge across Kimball's

sell, Majors and Waddell, and then "passed into the hands of its chief creditor, Mr. Ben Holladay," identified by historians as an energetic Missourian. Such reports are gleaned, in the main, from issues of the *Springfield Republican*, a still-existing Massachusetts newspaper.

Holladay so improved the line that he became (according to the same source) "one of the most wealthy men in America, say five millions of dollars, who maintained palatial homes on the Hudson ... and at Washington, D.C." Visiting his Overland line "about twice a year," he was reputed to have been driven "from Salt Lake to Atchison, twelve hundred and twenty miles, in six and one-half days" and was only "twelve days and two hours from San Francisco to Atchison ... the trip cost him probably twenty thousand dollars in wear and tear of coaches and injury to and loss of horses by rapid driving." This same Ben Holladay was described by the more scholarly Henry Villard as "a genuine specimen of the successful Western pioneer of former days, illiterate, coarse, pretentious, boastful, false and cunning." Just the stuff of which Hollywood or TV heroes are made.

The St. Joseph, Mo., line running to Sacramento, Calif., required 25 days for the trip. Originally operating semi-monthly, it was upgraded to weekly and then daily under Holladay. Recollecting his own stagecoach days, Capt. J. Lee Humfreville of the U.S. Calvary reported in an autobiography that stages transporting



Well-preserved stone ranch house and log barns near Park City served the Overland

Stage, Ben Holladay's line and Wells Fargo Express. Buildings are 138 years old.

—Drawing by Jack Goodman

Disguise was major theme of explorer's life

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Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: The Secret Agent Who Made the Pilgrimage to Mecca, Discovered the Kama Sutra, and Brought The Arabian Nights to the West, by Edward Rice; Scribners, 533 pp., \$35.

Among the fascinations of 19th century England is its lengthy roster of great and peculiar minds in men and women of extraordinary character and courage.

Many became scholar-adventurers, and the epitome of the type was Richard Francis Burton, the indefatigable explorer best known for his expedition into central Africa with John Speke in search of the source of the Nile River. Speke was eventually credited with the discovery of Lake Victoria as the river's headwater, but his feat would not have been possible without Burton's experience in facing the unknown.

Lionized during his lifetime, Burton's hold on the popular imagination has remained strong in the 100 years since his death. In this century

The Salt Lake Tribune



A genius at languages, Burton spoke 29. An obsessive writer, he published more than 40 books on his travels. He translated another 30 volumes, among them the *Kama Sutra*, a manual of sexual practices he discovered in India, and the story-telling classic *The Arabian Nights*, which he presented with its original eroticism intact. He understood erotica from personal experience, gaining much of his knowledge of both sex and language in brothels. Everywhere he went he made expansive notes on the religious and sexual mores of the natives. As a self-styled "amateur barbarian," he also freely

plunged a spear through Burton's cheek with such force that it came out the opposite side of his face, knocking out two teeth, damaging his palate and leaving deep scars that made his appearance even fiercer than it had been.

As far as danger went, the African expedition was the high-water mark of Burton's life but not the end of his travels. In 1860 he visited the United States, where he traveled by stagecoach to Salt Lake City to gather material for a book on Mormonism. Returning to England, at age 40, he married Isabel Arundell, the daughter of a prominent English Catholic family. Before joining the Foreign

candor, Burton's later diplomatic career included assignments in backwaters: From Fernando Po, he was transferred to Brazil, back to the Middle East in Damascus and finally, to Trieste in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where he finished out his days. He died in 1890 at the age of 69. Although he was knighted, it seems clear that his country never gave him the financial rewards or the honors his service should have commanded.

Disguise, notes Rice, was a major theme of Burton's life. It not only protected him in the field but shielded him from those who tried to know too much about the innermost man. Though his public actions were amply documented in his own books and the eager Victorian newspapers, no one can say, for instance, what his religious beliefs were or even if he had any.

His unwillingness to reveal himself also presents an obstacle for a biographer trying to get too intimate.

Bio traces poet's life in sympathetic way

Coleridge: Early Visions, by Richard Holmes; Viking, illustrated, 409 pp., \$22.95.

The news of Coleridge: *Early Visions* is that its author, Richard Holmes, not only forgives Samuel Taylor Coleridge for being who he was, but that he actually admires him for it.

This is not to be taken for granted. As Holmes writes in his preface to *Coleridge*: "Wordsworth called him 'the most wonderful man' he had ever known; but many subsequent biographers have been skeptical."

It would seem possible to write an entire book on Coleridge's opium addiction, his plagiarisms, his fecklessness in marriage, his political 'apostasy,' his sexual

desire to be a good father to their children.

When you add the complication that being at home with Sara seems somehow to have been connected with Coleridge's ill health and consequent dependence on opium, you get a portrait of a man who is suffering quite nobly.

Everything culminates with Coleridge's decision to join Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy in the Lake District of northern England during the summer of 1800.

Coleridge has up to this point been the stronger of the two men in their esthetically revolutionary collaboration on the first two editions of *Lyrical Ballads*. But

A multitude of coral and white picket fences surround the ranch building, helping the setting and overall look of the older structures retain the flavor "we moderns" associate with an Overland stagecoach station. Curiously, not a single tree shades the ranch houses.

While the present generation of the ranch houses.

"Founding families" is no longer is connected with the historic stagecoach stop, this columnist many years ago, asked the late Ranch Kimball Sr., "How did you get your unusual first name?" He replied: "I was named for the old Kimball Ranch out near Park City. I thought everyone knew that — you're obviously not a Utah native!"

ed in the east room for many years, both entered from outside the structure.

Considerable remodeling took place indoors to fit the building for ranch-house use, including an enlarged back room kitchen. Nearly on the right in the drawing, the white frame, two-story, porch-front building is a farmhouse-style structure dating after the turn of the century. However, two original log barns stand across the ranch road north of the stone house. Their thick, heavy logs laid to the top of the first story are said to be original. Both barns, very sizable affairs, thus date to the 1860s, but have been topped by gable style roofs in more recent times.

The two-story hotel built by William Kimball still retains a sturdy, clean-cut look with its buff and red sandstone walls topped by a rather low peaked roof modestly embellished at each end. When used as a rooming house, there were bedrooms on the main and second floor, and exclusive stage passengers when the establishment was very busy. A dining room on the east side of the main floor had a bar "to slack [sic] the thirst of tired travelers" that reputedly proved quite profitable. According to reports in Daughters of Utah Pioneers histories in 1947 and 1957, a store and post office operated at each end.

passengers and express were all light vehicles make in Concord, N.H., and drawn by four, six or eight good horse or mules. . . each had a mail, the express and mail always in the front boot under the foot of the driver. From nine to 12 passengers could be accommodated inside, four outside on the deck, and two with the driver. Quite a load. According to Nile explorer Richard F. Burton in his *City of the Saints*, the fare from the Missouri to Great Salt Lake City was \$175 — rather less, one supposes, than the fare charged today's passengers aboard Delta Air Line jets cruising at 33,000 feet between St. Louis and our capital city. At a far higher speed, of course.

Creek a few hundred yards west of the station, apparently in 1862. Three years later he was recorded as collecting a 25-cent toll "on all freighters" although the heaviest traffic on the route doubtless dropped off considerably following 1869 when steel rails first spanned Utah.

also saw service for both Ben Holladay's Stage Line and the Wells Fargo Express Company. Horace Greeley, Mark Twain and Walt Whitman stopped at the old Kimball Hotel to rest — very likely to eat the famous food (trout, wild duck, sage hen, beef or mutton) dished up by either Mrs. Melissa Coray Kimball or the proprietor's second wife, Martha Vance Kimball.

Unfortunately for 180's weary travelers, the Kimball Ranch of today is out of bounds for most visitors. It's reachable only by way of the Overland Stage Line, founded by one William H. Russell of New York, began operating across Utah in 1852 or thereabouts at the urging of the federal government. It was next carried on by the famous partnership of Rus-

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